

Called out of Corinth

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Do you look more like Christ or the culture surrounding you? Ignore the alluring voice of a corrupt culture and answer God's call to find your life in the riches of Jesus Christ.

Surrounding culture is like the current of a river. Many of us are unaware that we are being swept along. We have become so accustomed to its flow, so comfortable in its flow, that we forgotten that it is dangerous and deadly. It's always easier to go with the flow.

This semester – church in Corinth. Blessed in so many ways, but caught up in the current of culture surrounding it. Learn from their example – not always positive. Lessons for us: How should we, the church, live in the midst of a corrupt culture?

READ 1 Cor 1:1-3

I. Called out of Corinth

- Ex – I would rather live with the geography of Colorado. I don't want to live in Colorado; I don't want to be a Coloradan; I want God to move mountains to College Station, TX. I want to be a Texan. I was not born here, but this is home.
- We naturally identify with a place. When we meet someone – Where are you from?
- Corinthians inevitably identified with Corinth, which was not entirely a good thing.
- Describe the values of Corinth when Paul wrote letter from Ephesus in 54AD:
 - 1) Religious pluralism alone was valid
 - Population: 80-100k
 - Most prominent gods: Apollo, Athena, Isis, Serapis, Aphrodite, Hermes, Jupiter, Zeus, Fortuna; Emperor cult
 - Why worship one when you can worship many? Safer, more blessings
 - Idolatry permeated culture – Every holiday dedicated to a god. Every building, political event, holiday, ceremony, meat in the market
 - Jews and Christians – Only worshiped one God.
 - Labeled “atheists,” “Haters of the mankind”
 - Jews tolerated because they did not try to convert
 - Christians viewed with greater suspicion. Tried to persuade.
 - You can believe in anything, but you can't believe in just ONE thing
 - 2) Wealth always won
 - City in ruins today, but it was once the leading Roman city in Greece. More prominent than Athens in that day.
 - temples, monuments, stadiums, government buildings, huge markets
 - Destroyed by Rome in 146 BC. Rebuilt by Rome as center of trade between east and west because Corinth was located on the best real estate. Economically strategic location
 - *pic* – “master of two harbors” – Rome to west; Asia to east
 - *pic* – Travel around the cape was exceptionally dangerous
 - *pic* – Corinthians built a 6K long road between the ports
 - *pic* – transport not just cargo but entire ships up on rollers
 - Many of the ships, products, money moving East/West or West/East thru Corinth

- It was like the Panama canal of the ancient world
 - Today the Corinth Canal connects the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf
 - Fortunes could be made in Corinth. Get rich quick? Go to Corinth.
- 3) Personal pleasure was not to be denied
- 2 Ports: imagine a combination of Wall Street and the Vegas Strip
 - Most major cities were immoral, but Corinth had a long history
 - Ancient Greek literature – “Corinthian girl” = prostitute.
 - Legend – temple of Aphrodite owned 1000 prostitutes
 - Sailors squandered their money. Thus the proverb from Strabo, *Geog.* 8.6.20, “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth.”
 - 1 Cor 15:32 (Is 22:13; sarcastic). Eat, drink, be merry for tomorrow we die
- 4) Individual value derived from status
- “honor/shame” society. Every action/relationship brings honor or shame – it either increases your status in the eyes of society, or decreases status.
 - It’s all about who you know and how you are connected
 - In Corinth, status was everything
 - climb the status ladder by any and all means necessary. It was expected that people would...
 - Sacrifice integrity, religious conviction, relationships for status
 - those who lessen your status – you shun them, avoid them
 - those who heighten your status – pursue, fawn, ingratiate
 - those who challenge your status – destroy
 - Define your value by your status
 - Define the value of others based on what they could do for you.
 - Importance of wealth – display it or distribute it for status
- Corinth was a rough place for a Christian
 - “The problem was not that the church was in Corinth but that too much of Corinth was in the church.” (Fee 1987: 4).
 - How did Paul know they were in trouble? He planted this church.
 - Paul knew the church, he knew the people, he knew the city of Corinth
 - Planted this church on his 2nd missionary journey in early AD 50
 - Acts 18 – Priscilla/Aquila; Jewish resistance; gentile receptivity
 - 18 months. Some prominent Jews believed. Others brought before Gallio.
 - Large church; many house churches; Some Jews, mostly gentiles; rich and poor; status and no status, but mostly those without status
 - Nearly all infected by the values of Corinth. Too much Corinth in church.
 - Message of 1 Corinthians
 - Go against the flow of culture because you belong to God
 - You are different, so be different
 - Go against the flow of culture because you are rich in Christ

Go against the flow of culture because you belong to God – 1:2

- “Called” – 3 times
 - Called out of Corinth. Not leave city, but live differently within the city
 - John 15:19; 17:11. 17:14-17. In the world but not of the world
 - Live in 2 worlds. Physically here; heart, mind bodies belong to God
 - Called to God
- “Saints by calling”
 - “saint” = “holy one”; “set apart”
 - Three aspects of holiness or “sainthood”

- Positional – 1 Cor 6:11
 - ex – “Righteous Lot”
- Ultimate – 1 thess 5:23
- Progressive – 2 Cor 7:1
 - Becoming who you are in Christ
 - Paul doesn’t doubt their salvation but their transformation
- Why does Paul address them in this way? He is attempting to influence their sense of identity, so that they will changes their values and behaviors.
- They ARE the “Church” that resides in Corinth
 - Identity is more important than geography
 - Church = assembly = called out ones. An identity that is...
 - deeper than place; deeper than race, status, wealth
- Paul didn’t just do this for troubled churches, but for all believers – Phil 3:20
 - Significant part of your sanctification is understanding your identity.
- How do you identify yourself?
 - In different situations, I think of myself in different terms
 - Race
 - Groomsman in Chinese wedding. Rarely have I been a minority.
 - Nationality
 - Traveling internationally; treated poorly; pull out my passport
 - Role/Job
 - Most common greeting: What do you do?
 - Relationships
 - I am know as Tristie’s husband; Ben’s dad; AnnaJoy’s dad
- When I identify with Jesus Christ, my entire perspective on all of life changes.
 - Corinthians struggling because they identified too deeply with Corinth.
 - I don’t need others to give me value. Enjoy relationships
 - I don’t need to take or use. I am free to give because I am rich

Go against the flow of culture because you are rich in Christ – 1:4-9

- Grace. Paul begins most of his letters with motivation before exhortation
 - Something for nothing. Not just something, but the best that God has
 - All of which is found in Christ Jesus
 - 1 Cor 1:26. Unworthy
 - Who were these people? Not many rich or powerful.
- Enriched in ALL speech and knowledge
 - Speech – rhetoric valued in Roman colony
 - Knowledge – education and philosophical training valued
 - Paul is talking about the power of God’s Spirit in their lives
 - Only the elite had speech and knowledge in Corinth
 - In Christ, they all were rich.
 - Every necessary spiritual resource supplied
 - 2 Peter. “Seeing that His divine power has granted...”
- 1 Cor 1:7
- Not lacking in any gift (manifestation of grace)
 - Hopeful future – 1:7-8
 - Secure family – 1:9
 - Perfect Savior

- Name “Jesus” 8 times
- Called “Christ” 9 times
- Described as “Lord” 6 times
- Mentioned in every verse

Application

- Situation a lot like ours.
 - Surrounded by a culture that hated or ignored God. No escape.
 - Great spiritual resources that they were not using to the fullest
 - Called to stay but be different
 - Why? God had called them to Himself; God wanted them to influence

- ***Do you look more like Christ or the culture surrounding you?***
 - 1) Allow Spirit to search your heart
 - 2) Consecrate yourself today to finding your identity and forming your values in Jesus Christ.